

SEX EDUCATION FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

"Sex education is understood to include all educational measures which may help human beings meet the problems or situations of life that have their origin in human sex relations and the sex instinct,-- problems that inevitably come in some form into the experiences of every normal human being. These problems extend over a vast range of life experiences, from simple little matters of personal sex health to the exceedingly complicated physical, mental and social relationships that concern marriage and the family."

Sex education must deal with both the constructive and the destructive aspects of sex. On the constructive side, it means the promotion of wholesome esthetic and scientific attitudes towards sex in all of its normal relations in life, and of healthy happy marriage and parenthood.

On the destructive side, it must attempt to prevent or cure the common evils of uncontrolled or mismangaged sex life such as personal ill health, venereal disease, illegitimacy, promiscuity, sexual immorality, sexual vulgarity, unseccessful marriage, uneugenic parenthood.

For sex education to be effective instruction has to be given from infancy ^{to} maturity.

The ideal situation would be for students when they reach college to have already been so grounded in fundamental knowledge of sex hygiene that they would be not merely ready but prepared for the instruction which the college has to offer.

The vast amounts of literature which is pouring from the press concerning the need for sex education in the home, in the school, in the church, and the sex problems facing youth in the colleges themselves,

in war industry areas, in army camp areas, in congested cities, make one realize that youth has had little scientific information that would prepare them for this most important aspect of human life. Our institutions have been asleep and have grossly neglected sex education. We have been greatly concerned about the student's soul, as is indicated by the number and power of religious institutions and agencies. We have been greatly concerned that his body receive ~~receive~~ the proper kind of nourishment, as is indicated by our great interest in calories and vitamins, and school lunches, and school cafeterias; but that other inevitability of human life, his sex life, has received scant attention because it has been a matter not to be openly discussed. Parents not only have not given their children proper and adequate instruction, but they have not been and are not prepared to do so.

This does not mean that information has not been obtained. Accumulated evidence indicates that normal children are almost certain to get more or less sex instruction not later than the early adolescent years from unreliable sources. Morals become corrupted, vulgar attitudes fixed, and health injured because of lack of proper information. The only sure pathway to healthy wholesome attitudes and good conduct is in instructing children gradually as the facts of sex come to the attention of the individual child.

In college, sex education should help toward intelligent choice by developing in young persons appreciation and understanding of many controls of sex. Some of these are: ideals or philosophy of life which the individual may develop for himself; sex ethics, or society's approved standards of sex conduct, respect for public opinion; knowledge of legal, social and medical consequences of sex conduct; conscience or feeling of obligation; emulation of attractive personal examples; fine

and appropriate reticence; high respect for womanhood and manhood; habits of chastity; knowledge of the general relations of sex and life; the rewards in mature life of self control in youth; literature which portrays romantic love at its best.

DOES COLLEGE EQUIP ONE FOR THE INEVITABILITIES OF LIFE?

The relatively recent study, "Women After College," by Foster and Wilson, published by the Columbia University Press is a study made of 100 women, all college graduates from 44 different colleges. One of the purposes of the study was to explore the needs and types of problems facing college graduates, and to determine what contributions their college experience had made to their solution.

The most important finding of the study was that both the parents and the educators of these women from the elementary school through college had almost completely ignored their evident need to be prepared for certain inevitabilities of their lives, such as:

The problems of sexual adjustment, the inevitability in every person's life. This had been grossly neglected. As a result, these women had many unresolved fears, anxieties, and insecurities about sex, about their own sexuality and their husbands, and about the sex education and behavior of their children. Few had acquired a conception of sex as a normal part of everyone.

Words, language and behavior associated in any way with sex were taboo. This entire phase of their development was shrouded in mystery and ignorance.

There were conflict over courtship practices. They felt guilt over petting in its mildest forms, for their early training had set such strict taboos and restrictions on physical contact. Their guilt was in strong conflict with their enjoyment of this new experience.

The inevitably question of, "How far to go," was before most of them. The only answer to this perplexing question offered by parents or teachers was a further prohibition. There were conflicts also with boys who were very convincing as to the desirability of petting.

Most of these women felt that their college training had contributed nothing to their sex education of a scientific nature that would help them in adjustment to a most important phase of their life.

In a study by Kirkendall of the "Sex Adjustment of Young Men" from material collected by him over a period of 12 years from men most of whom were college or university students, the fact was questioned as to whether or not these young men had had a moral education better than that of the average home. The various adjustments used by them to bring about a satisfactory sex life indicate, like the study of 100 college women by Foster and Wilson, that sex is a chronological panorama bringing new problems and new experiences from year to year, even from day to day; and that to answer the questions of a child of eight is not to provide him with adequate information for the problems of eighteen.

Kirkendall found that many of the hundreds of young men counselled by him were well informed concerning certain of the physical aspects of sex but were wholly uninstructed with respect to the most helpful attitudes to assume or the constructive side of sex. These young men were puzzled and experimnted to find the most desirably forms of adjustment to follow. Complete sublimation, autoerotic practices, homosexuality were some of the adjustments used. For the most part the usual misconceptions were a part of their education. For some of them the problem of achieving an orderly sex-control, of ~~be~~

learning to live with sex, is still unsolved.

These men of Kirkendall's study were far more successful in their academic careers than the average students. In general, they were well adjusted in social and various other activities of their lives; and from outward appearances they would seem to have escaped the perplexities of the average young man. Yet, they had experienced life's tragedies and had grown up in ignorance and without adequate counsel and advice.

These two studies not only suggest the weaknesses of certain phases of our college curricula, but are suggestive of what might be incorporated into our already existent courses that will round out intellectual and social intelligence with an adequate intelligence on matters of sex.

ATTITUDES CONCERNING SEX

There has been a marked cultural lag in regard to our attitudes toward sex and in our practices in sexual relationships. In no phase of our culture is there more need for adjustment than in this phase of life. There is a real role that colleges might play in helping to bring about better adjustment. Training in healthy attitudes and acquaintance with scientific knowledge and facts will make for better adjustment.

College students should know that sex is a normal function which is natural and wholesome, not to be suppressed or thought of as impure or mysterious.

They should know that it is just as normal to discuss their sex life with well informed persons as it is to discuss matters in other fields of learning. Also, that it is intelligent to have a wide range of accurate information concerning it.

They should know that restraint and moderateness in discussions concerning sex are desirably^e and such discussions should not bring embarrassment or confusion or make for vagueness or cause inhibitions. That when we are troubled about social, political, economic or intellectual problems we discuss them freely with our family or friends but we do not constantly keep them on parade. The same should be true about sex.

It would help college students to know that their sexual impulses and desires and problems are not peculiar to them alone, that all college students, indeed all normal persons have similar problems; that information concerning sex and its psychology will aid in helping them to make proper sex adjustments and that correct habits of sex behavior can be learned in the same way, as correct habits in other fields.

It would help also if college students knew that sex itself does not create difficulties, but that when difficulties occur they are the result of lack of understanding of the place of sex.

College students should know the risk of disease in promiscuous sex relations; and should have scientific instruction concerning social diseases.

They should be impressed with the fact that marriage, home and children are values to plan for and to cherish and that sex properly handled makes for great and positive contributions to these values; but that if improperly used, sex brings sorrow and misery and great disappointment.

SOME FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

Besides certain fundamental attitudes, there are certain fundamental principles that as future leaders, in all walks of life, as

teachers, and as parents, college students should be well grounded in:

They should be taught how to solve adequately their own sex problems.

They should know the scientific vocabulary pertaining to sex.

They should have a thorough knowledge of the human body.

They should have a thorough knowledge of reproduction.

They should have a thorough knowledge and training in proper sex standards

They should know how a child learns

They should know the impulses and desires of the child

They should know pedagogical principles in sex education.

The work of sex instruction should be left in the hands of as few persons as possible, if their personalities are suitable. Such combinations as biologist and psychologist; biologist and sociologist, psychologist and sociologist, might be worked out. If either one of these persons is best fitted and will specifically prepare himself for the job this might be the best arrangement of all. The utmost care should be taken to select as lecturer or lecturers those persons whose character and scholarship best fit them to appeal in a wholesome natural and inspiring way to young people.

All departments furnishing material should unite in investigating just what should be given and how the material from each department should be blended into one continuous ^{whole} ~~treatment~~. Even though a person from one department conducts the course, the union of effort by all should be made.

The material presented should not be too detailed, but enough facts should be given to be impressive in order for the students to make practical and inspirational deductions. Lectures should not take

the place of more thorough departmental work, but should serve as an opening for the continuation of the subject in the various suitable departments.

Effective character, whether in respect to sex or any other matter cannot be built except upon genuine and accurate knowledge of the facts. Nevertheless, this is not enough. Habits of right and appropriate acting, feeling and thinking about these facts are equally important. The work of the teacher in any realm of truth is not done until the student has had such training, interpretation and example that he can use and control his powers in applying that truth and in avoiding error.

In conclusion, may I say that colleges should no longer continue to ignore or evade either wholly or in part the big problem of sex education. It will probably take several generations to eliminate from the minds of young people and adults many of the myths and superstitions which have been tied up with sex, but it can be done.

The colleges cannot do it alone. The job belongs to the home, the schools, and to all institutions working with and in behalf of youth.

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